

did? Did he expect to remove the troops after a short time the way his father did? Food for thought ...

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Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers and Lara Putnam (eds.), *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. viii + 331, £67.00, £16.95, pb.

The outcome of a conference at the University in Michigan in 1998, *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* is the result of almost a decade of work and reflection. The thirteen articles detail the Bolivian, Peruvian, Costa Rican, Puerto Rican, Mexican and Brazilian experiences with liberalism after independence, and are grouped into three sections: the impact of liberalism on the definition of citizenship; the ways in which the popular classes made use of the law; and the policing of public space, including a 'moral sanitation campaign' waged to shift prostitutes away from downtown areas in Rio de Janeiro, and a similar one in Puerto Rico entailing vaginal examinations of women. All in the interests of seeking out the fast track to modernity ...

In carefully researched and crafted essays, the authors demonstrate that modernising efforts in the new nations were delayed or stunted, or both. The 93-year delay in promulgating a new civil code in Brazil, outlined by Keila Grinberg, is a case in point. Grinberg points out that a new civil code, based on liberal ideology, exposed the contradictions inherent in a social structure heavily reliant on slavery; in effect it had to await the abolition of slavery. Although new legislation was envisaged in some countries as a step towards changing society, liberalism in effect meant the creation of new hierarchies, or the remodelling of existing hierarchies to suit the needs of the republican state. Thus Rossana Barragán outlines how the Bolivian state went from ranking the populace according to ethnicity, to applying understandings of honour and infamy (based on pre-independence and in part even medieval notions) in assessing Bolivians' entitlement, to full citizenship rights. Nor did criteria of honour and respectability fade into insignificance over time: in Cochabamba, Laura Gotkowitz found that slander litigation continued as the dominant type of litigation into the 1950s; and in Brazil, Brodwyn Fischer shows that the importance of legal documents that proved civic status (marriage certificates, rental and employment contracts) in criminal trials actually increased, with a new system of legal stratification mirroring the economic, racial and gender hierarchies that were in place in the country by the 1950s. Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha shows how the Brazilian system of criminal identification relied heavily on pinpointing of physical attributes such as colour, which were, in turn, duly linked to social and moral values.

In order to drive home the fact that liberalism, despite these limitations, was not devoid of meaning, the authors in part draw upon previously published work: Sarah Chambers' observation that plebeians were quick to use liberal ideology as leverage to claim privileges, including citizenship rights, draws heavily on her book, *From Subjects to Citizens: honor, gender, and politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (Penn State University Press, 1999). She points out how Peruvian plebeians responded to a more activist criminal justice system by invoking citizenship rights, echoing the liberal ideology that permeated early republican Peru. Chambers goes as far as asserting

that the arguments proffered by lower class men (and to some extent women) in litigation ultimately helped shape the new penal code in 1862.

Liberal ideology shaped Latin American societies in curious and often overlooked ways: Peter Guardino, studying indigenous villages in Oaxaca, finds that purported ancient (even pre-Hispanic) egalitarian traditions in the politics of these villages in fact had their origin in nineteenth-century liberalism. While the ideas of Chambers and Guardino are plausible and intriguing, they appear to rest on frail evidence: both authors admit that these processes can only be guessed at; the processes they point to have left little conclusive evidence.

The detailed analyses of slander trials by Brodwyn Fischer on Brazil, Laura Gotkowitz on Bolivia, and Lara Putnam on Costa Rica, expose broad similarities as well as local variations in notions of honour. In addition, each essay has its own accent. Fischer observes that the definition of honour became more stringent from the 1930s onwards; Putnam emphasises the way in which legal proceedings influenced street culture, with threats of legal proceedings becoming part of the street drama set among the market stalls in Puerto Limón; and Gotkowitz finds that women who responded to economic change by participating in the market economy became highly vulnerable to insults. Challenging the established order was not without cost; however, as Sueann Caulfield demonstrates (showing, among other things, how young women gave up their virginity with alacrity in order to put an end to parental control of their sexuality and leisure activities), some went out of their way to do so.

The contributions strikingly showcase the blindness of honour-obsessed elites to the social realities of their day. The Brazilian campaign to eliminate 'white slavery' recalls Don Quixote's windmills. In her study of pimping and pandering trials, Cristiana Schettini Pereira found that young white 'damsels in distress' were few and far between: many of the prostitutes were non-white; few considered themselves exploited or dependent. Similarly, the Puerto Rican local elites' attempts at controlling what were, to them, socially unacceptable cultural practices such as dancing to and singing of the *plena*, lambasting the public nature of such displays as inherently immoral, appears quaintly blinkered, especially given that the *plena* had, by the 1930s, been turned into a nationalist icon, considered to represent the very Puerto Rican soul.

Provided with a lucid introduction to the role of honour in Latin American societies during the colonial period and the 'long nineteenth century', the volume offers a wealth of historical and ethnographic detail, attesting to the longevity and malleability of notions of honour in Latin American societies: honour was used to claim citizen rights by some individuals; and to put lower class citizens into their place by, it would seem, most republican states in Latin America. The strength of the book lies in the drawing together of studies from different parts of Latin America (albeit represented unequally, with six of the studies being drawn from Brazil). Eileen J. Findlay's article is commendable for tackling the manner in which historians have used criminal records in their analysis, and the volume is further enriched by the inclusion of what is, for historians, an unusual but promising approach: that of including a (historical) analysis of literary works. While several of the authors have presented parts of their contributions to this volume in other publications, the collection offers an effective yet insightful introduction to the theme of honour, and, more especially, the interplay between honour and the law.